

REFLECTIONS FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ 28 November 2021

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

Advent is here! It is almost unbelievable that time is moving so quickly as we begin this new Church year. Our readings today give us a sense of the themes that will be threaded through this blessed season: a cry from the heart, a promise, a word of assurance, and a blessing.

Psalm 25 holds the poignant cry for help, “Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me” (Ps 25:4-5). There is a lovely reflection by Sister Sallie Latkovich csj which reminds us that God is waiting for us to trust enough to cry out.



This Advent, I have come to see that it is God who waits for us
waits for us to notice that we are indeed created by God.
God only sees our goodness and waits for us to notice, too,
waits for us to notice the myriad ways in which God is with
us,

waits for us to notice when we observe people acting in the image of God:
in covenant with one another, both those known and unknown,
both those alike and those very different,
waits for us to notice the emptiness in our hearts that can only be filled by God's own Self.
In the season of Advent, as Christmas approaches, God waits for us
to notice the wonder and innocence of little children.
It is true that in Advent we wait; but really, it is God who waits for us.
May we savour and revel in that reality.

The promise is found in the first reading of Jeremiah as God says, “In those days and at that time, I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David who will execute justice and righteousness in the land” (Jer 33:15). This promise is from the very heart of God and causes the prophet to give God a new name, “The Lord is our righteousness.” For us in this modern time, “righteousness”



had not been a word which we understood in the way the people did in the Old Testament. It had become associated with self-righteousness which was condescending and superior. However, we now understand it in the new way of “right relationships” – right relationships with our God, with each other, with all creation, and with ourselves. To see God’s name as “Righteousness” in that new sense is to understand the wonder of inclusion, rooted in the sacred communion of all creation. Right relationships ensure that everyone – human and other-than-human – has unique dignity and has a place at the table of Mercy.

Our Cosmic Advent Wreath reflects this gift of our newly awakened awareness of the sacred communion of all creation. The Cosmic Advent Wreath is rooted in “deep

Living Cosmic Advent Wreath
Reque, Peru, 2020

incarnation” – week one: Birth of the Universe; week two: Birth of the solar system; week three: Birth of Jesus the Christ; and week four: My Birth into the Whole Cosmic Body of the Universe). The fifth moment is centered on “All is One,” that moment which Pope Francis speaks about as the “joy of our hope.” On this first Sunday of Advent, we rejoice in the love of God outpoured in the creation of the cosmos, the universe, Earth, and all Earth creatures.

The word of assurance comes from the Gospel of Luke which seems a little strange in the Advent readings we usually associate with gentleness and peace. Jesus speaks to the disciples about “signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves” (Lk 21:25). He tells them that “People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Lk 21:26). It is not a hard stretch to imagine these things happening in our world today from the persistent COVID pandemic with the omicron variant to the terrible floods of last week in British Columbia and western Newfoundland to earthquakes in Peru and Chile yesterday to the cyberattack on the health information systems in Newfoundland and Labrador two weeks ago.



An attentive heart
open to the cosmos

But what is even more important are Jesus’ words of comfort and assurance that, if we are alert and awake to these realities around us, we will find redemption. In Sister Veronica Lawson’s words, “An attentive heart and constant prayer for the strength to withstand whatever comes is the proper stance for the Christian believer. An attentive heart will be attuned to the cry of Earth and the cry of those rendered poor by those who exploit the goods of Earth.”

And, finally, the blessing comes from the first letter to the Thessalonians, which we believe to be the oldest text in the whole New Testament, “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you” (1 Thess 3:12). This is a promise of love which, when we read carefully, we see

echoing the sacred communion of all creation held in the loving embrace of God, “love for one another and for all.” This blessing which is built on our trusting in and listening to the Word of God brings all our readings together. It is a response to our cry for help, the living evidence of God’s promise to us of right relationships, and the assurance that comes from listening to God’s Word in the midst of the challenges and disturbances we see around us.

We end our reflections this morning with a slightly long Advent credo written by Allan Boesak, a member of the South African Dutch Reformed Church and anti-apartheid activist:

It is not true that creation and the human family are doomed to destruction and loss.

This is true: For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life;

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction.

This is true: I have come that they may have life, and that abundantly.

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction rule forever.

This is true: Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon

his shoulder, his name shall be called wonderful councilor, mighty God, the Everlasting, the Prince of peace.

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world.

This is true: To me is given authority in heaven and on earth, and lo I am with you, even until the end of the world.

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church before we can be peacemakers.

This is true: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young ones shall see visions and your old ones shall have dreams.

It is not true that our hopes for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history.

This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that the true worshipers shall worship God in spirit and in truth.

So let us enter Advent in hope, even hope against hope. Let us see visions of love and peace and justice. Let us affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage: Jesus Christ – the life of the world.

Happy first Sunday of Advent!

